

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

ANGEL CHEVRESTT,

Plaintiff,

- against -

VOX MEDIA, INC.

Defendant.

Docket No. 1:18-cv-11698

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Angel Chevestt (“Chevestt” or “Plaintiff”) by and through his undersigned counsel, as and for his Complaint against Defendant Vox Media, Inc. (“Vox” or “Defendant”) hereby alleges as follows:

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. This is an action for copyright infringement under Section 501 of the Copyright Act. This action arises out of Defendant’s unauthorized reproduction and public display of two copyrighted photographs of NFL football player Geno Smith, owned and registered by Chevestt, a New York based photographer. Accordingly, Chevestt seeks monetary relief under the Copyright Act of the United States, as amended, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. This claim arises under the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*, and this Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1338(a).

3. Upon information and belief, this Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant transacts business in New York through its magazine subscriptions and previously registered with the New York Department of State Division of Corporations.

4. Venue is proper in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b).

PARTIES

5. Chevestt is a professional photojournalist in the business of licensing his photographs to online and print media for a fee having a usual place of business at 248 Glen Avenue, Apt 2, Dumont, New Jersey, 07628.

6. Upon information and belief, Vox is a foreign business corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Delaware, with a place of business at 85 Broad Street, New York, New York 10004. Upon information and belief Vox is registered with the New York Department of State Division of Corporations to do business in the State of New York. At all times material hereto, Vox has owned and operated a website at the URL: www.SBNation.com (the “Website”).

STATEMENT OF FACTS

A. Background and Plaintiff’s Ownership of the Photograph

7. On August 11, 2015, just two days before the New York Jets were scheduled to play their pre-season opener against the Detroit Lions, starting quarterback Geno Smith suffered a broken jaw after he was punched by teammate Ikemefuna Enemkapli during a locker room altercation. Smith had surgery on August 13, 2015 and was expected to be out for six to ten weeks. The altercation and Smith’s injury were not only heavily covered by the sports press in New York City, but the incident also became national news.

8. On August 15, 2015, two days after Smith's surgery, Chevestt caught a shirtless Smith throwing passes to a friend outside of Smith's apartment and took photographs of him- the first photographs taken of Smith after his surgery (the "Photographs"). A true and correct copy of the Photograph is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

9. Chevestt then licensed the Photographs to the New York Post. On August 16, 2015, the New York Post ran an "exclusive" article that featured the Photographs in both its print and web editions entitled Big Mouth! Geno emerges for the first-time post-sucker punch surgery. See <https://nypost.com/2015/08/16/geno-smith-feeling-great-post-sucker-punch-surgery/>.

Chevestt's name was featured in a gutter credit identifying him as the photographer of the Photographs. A true and correct copy of the web edition of the article is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

10. Chevestt is the author of the Photograph and has at all times been the sole owner of all right, title and interest in and to the Photograph, including the copyright thereto.

11. The Photographs was registered with United States Copyright Office and was given Copyright Registration Numbers VA 1-983-198 and VA 1-983-199. See Exhibit C.

B. Defendant's Infringing Activities

12. Vox ran an article on the Website entitled *Geno Smith plays catch shirtless, feeling 'great' post surgery to repair broken jaw*. See <https://www.sbnation.com/lookit/2015/8/16/9161413/geno-smith-plays-catch-shirtless-feeling-great-post-surgery-to-repair>.

13. The article featured the Photographs. A true and correct copy of the article and screenshots of the Photographs on the article are attached hereto as Exhibit D.

14. Vox did not license the Photograph from Plaintiff for its article, nor did Vox have Plaintiff's permission or consent to publish the Photograph on its Website.

CLAIM FOR RELIEF
(COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT AGAINST VOX)
(17 U.S.C. §§ 106, 501)

15. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained in Paragraphs 1-14 above.

16. Vox infringed Plaintiff's copyright in the Photograph by reproducing and publicly displaying the Photograph on the Website. Vox is not, and has never been, licensed or otherwise authorized to reproduce, publically display, distribute and/or use the Photograph.

17. The acts of Defendant complained of herein constitute infringement of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright in violation of Sections 106 and 501 of the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. §§ 106 and 501.

18. Upon information and belief, the foregoing acts of infringement by Vox have been willful, intentional, and purposeful, in disregard of and indifference to Plaintiff's rights.

19. As a direct and proximate cause of the infringement by the Defendant of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright, Plaintiff is entitled to damages and Defendant's profits pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504(b) for the infringement.

20. Alternatively, Plaintiff is entitled to statutory damages up to \$150,000 per work infringed for Defendant's willful infringement of the Photograph, pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504(c).

21. Plaintiff further is entitled to his attorney's fees and full costs pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 505.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests judgment as follows:

1. That Defendant Vox be adjudged to have infringed upon Plaintiff's copyrights in the Photograph in violation of 17 U.S.C §§ 106 and 501;
2. Plaintiff be awarded either: a) Plaintiff's actual damages and Defendant's profits, gains or advantages of any kind attributable to Defendant's infringement of Plaintiff's Photograph; or b) alternatively, statutory damages of up to \$150,000 per copyrighted work infringed pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504;
3. That Defendant be required to account for all profits, income, receipts, or other benefits derived by Defendant as a result of its unlawful conduct;
4. That Plaintiff be awarded his costs, expenses and attorneys' fees pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 505;
5. That Plaintiff be awarded pre-judgment interest; and
6. Such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury on all issues so triable in accordance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b).

Dated: Valley Stream, New York
December 13, 2018

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